

Fiction

Atmospheric Disturbances by Riva Galchen

Love and meteorology converge as Dr. Leo Lieberstein searches for his wife, unaccountably replaced by a simulacrum, or so he believes.

City of Thieves by David Benioff

In this darkly comedic novel, set during the siege of Leningrad, two young prisoners are sent on an absurd errand by a Russian colonel.

Dangerous Laughter: Thirteen Stories by Stephen Millhauser

These inventive and fantastic stories range in subject from counting fir-tree needles to teenage laughter parties to building a tower to heaven.

The Ginseng Hunter by Jeff Talarigo

Refugees fleeing political oppression and famine disrupt a Chinese man's solitude in this spare, tender portrait of life on the North Korean border.

The Hakawati by Rabin Alameddine

Interweaving memory and fable, this dazzling epic tale of a modern Lebanese family's vigil for a dying patriarch unveils the magical power of storytelling.

Olive Kitteridge by Elizabeth Strout

Interlinked stories of life in a small coastal town focus on retired schoolteacher Olive Kitteridge's difficult nature, ultimately revealing her humanity despite her imperfections.

Fiction (cont.)

Peace by Richard Bausch

This taut, stark novel in which three GIs confront the moral dilemmas of combat renders a powerful meditation on the themes of trust, war, and redemption.

The Plague of Doves by Louise Erdrich

Ojibwe and white characters narrate a tense, complex story of murder, love, and shared history in a dying North Dakota town.

Resistance by Owen Sheers

In this haunting, alternative history, after the men disappear from a remote Welsh village, the women respond to invading German soldiers.

Unaccustomed Earth by Jhumpa Lahiri

These luminous stories give the reader a glimpse of the lives, loves, and malaise of Bengali Americans.

The Wasted Vigil by Aslam Nadeem

This haunting, poetic novel weaves a paradoxically beautiful tale of love, loss, hope, and despair in Afghanistan.

The Ghost Soldiers by James Tate

The varied narrators in these 100 poems relate tales of, among others, alien kidnappers, navels, and houseflies, all delightfully off-kilter and frequently chuckle-worthy.

Special Orders by Edward Hirsch

An unflinchingly honest and unsentimental examination of a man's lifetime of disappointment strikes an unexpectedly hopeful note in this slim volume of finely wrought poems.

Non-Fiction

American Made by Nick Taylor

A monumental appraisal of the Works Progress Administration recounts how the program permanently changed U. S. social policies and its physical and cultural landscape.

The Bin Ladens: An Arabian Family by Steve Coll

An intimate look at this large, influential Saudi family of which Osama is but one member reveals the complexity of the modern Arab world.

The Dark Side by Jane Mayer

This harrowing account of post-9/11 counterterrorism is an indictment of the Bush administration's endorsement of torture as a legitimate interrogation tool.

Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950 by Glenda E. Gilmore

This groundbreaking history follows an early twentieth century movement for social justice in the South that evolved into the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

The Forever War by Dexter Filkins

Eyewitness reporting of military engagements and civilian life in war-torn Afghanistan and Iraq is visceral yet measured, avoiding simplistic conclusions.

The Hemingses of Monticello by Annette Gordon-Reed

A comprehensive history of a family and their owners, including Thomas Jefferson, reveals the complex nature of slave relations in America.

Non-Fiction (cont.)

In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto

by Michael Pollan

This extended essay considers generations of human experience and research to explicate a simple mantra: eat food, not too much, mostly plants.

Pictures at a Revolution: Five Movies and the Birth of the New Hollywood by Mark Harris

The 1967 best-picture nominees provide a framework for examining pivotal changes in the film industry reflecting radical shifts in American society.

The Suicide Index: Putting My Father's Death in Order by Joan Wickersham

Brave and unflinching in its honesty, this memoir examines the effects of suicide on those left behind.

This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War by Drew G. Faust

A unique explication from many perspectives illuminates the profound social and political consequences of the unprecedented number of soldiers who died during the American Civil War.

Traffic: Why We Drive the Way We Do (and What It Says About Us) by Tom Vanderbilt

Balancing meticulous research with an approachable style, this captivating and enlightening read lends new insight into a nearly universal activity.

A Voyage Long and Strange: Rediscovering the New World by Tony Horowitz

What starts as a fact-finding travelogue transforms into a diverting romp through the history and mythology surrounding the early explorers of the Americas.



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*Reviews taken from the American Library Association website.

American Library Association List of Notable Books for 2009



The Notable Books Council of the Reference and User Services Association, a division of the American Library Association, selected these titles for their significant contribution to the expansion of knowledge or for the pleasure they can provide to adult readers. Titles were selected from books published from November 2007 through November 2008.